

*bay nat. Hist. Soc.* 49: 554) about the small minivets, a male and two females, sharing the labour at a nest — from building the nest to feeding the chicks. He did not say anything

about sharing the duty of incubation and was not sure whether the less active female was a chick of previous brood.

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#### 14. OCCURRENCE OF WHITEBREASTED LAUGHING THRUSHES (*GARRULAX JERDONI* BLYTH) IN GOA

The report on the ornithological survey of Goa by Robert B. Grubh and Salim Ali (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 73, No. 1) refers to an "excursion... made to the top of Vagheri in Valpoi taluka, just under 1000 m, and said to be the highest hill in Goa. This was specially in order to establish whether or not the plant genus *Rubus* (brambles) and its symbiotic bird genus *Garrulax* (laughing thrushes) also occur in Goa as both do in the Kerala ranges a couple of hundred metres above this elevation. While bracken (*Pteridium* sp.) another regular member of this plant-bird association, was plentiful near the top, there was no sign of *Rubus* or *Garrulax* although otherwise the biotope seemed eminently appropriate."

I visited the forests of Goa with a few members of WWF-India, from the 6th to the 10th of April 1982. Our visit was confined to the localities of Castlerock-Dudhsagar, Molem and Mayem lake. On the 6th of April, at about 18.00 hrs, while coming back from a trek along the Kali river at Castlerock, I saw an active flock of babbler-like birds. The birds were not shy and they kept moving from tree to tree, sometimes descending to shrubs and undergrowth. Closer inspection revealed them to be Whitebreasted laughing thrushes in a flock of

about 30. They were feeding on the fruits of Atki (*Maesa indica* Wall.) a medium-sized tree abundant in the evergreen forest of Castlerock and on the fruits of *Luvunga eleutherandra* Dalz., a scandent glabrous shrub common in the forest. Occasionally they would come down to the ground presumably for insects. The birds continued with their noisy feeding activity for a while and then gradually disappeared into the thick forest behind.

Next day, i.e. on the 7th of April, we trekked along railway track from Castlerock to Dudhsagar waterfall. At about 15.00 hrs, just before Dudhsagar railway station, a mixed hunting party of birds was seen in the valley to the west. The party included four Redvented bulbuls, three Yellowbrowed bulbuls, eight Jungle babblers and fourteen Whitebreasted laughing thrushes. Along with the bulbuls, the laughing thrushes were seen feeding on the fruits of Gol (*Trema orientalis* Blume), a common forest shrub. At times the thrushes were seen hunting for insects in moss-covered branches of trees and on occasion they would come to the ground along with the babblers. The party moved after sometime.

The first sighting of the Whitebreasted laughing thrushes was at Castlerock which is

in Karnataka, albeit on the boundary of Karnataka and Goa. The second sighting was at Dudhsagar (alt. about 800 m), which is well within the Goa region. These hills of Goa have luxuriant evergreen forests, a typical habitat for laughing thrushes. The region does not seem to have the well-known food plants of these birds: 1) brambles (*Rubus* sp.), and 2) hill guava (*Rhodomyrtus tomentosa* Wt.), but the other known associated plants: 1) atki (*Masea indica* Wall.), 2) gol (*Trema orientalis* Blume) and 3) bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) are quite common. Out of these the fruits of *Maesa indica* and *Trema orientalis* are definitely consumed by laughing thrushes, but the association of the birds with bracken (*Pteridium aquili-*

*num*) may be related to the fact that the plant contains insect moulting hormones. This may increase the likelihood of finding insects in the vicinity of the plant.

*Garrulax jerdoni* has been previously recorded in the hills of Kerala and Western Tamilnadu north of the Achankovil Gap (c. 9°N. lat.); Cardamom, Kannan Devan and Palni hills, and High Wavy Mountains; from c. 1200 m to the summits. This observation confirms the occurrence of the bird also in the Goa region.

I am grateful to Mr Marcelin Almeida who helped in the identification of plants and supplied much useful information about the forests of the region.

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#### 15. A NEW RECORD OF SUNBIRDS AS AVIAN PESTS ON GRAPE AROUND HYDERABAD

Around Hyderabad, grape is grown in about 1000 ha. It is one of the important fruit crops and is being occasionally damaged by many species of birds causing heavy loss to the grape growers.

Perumal *et al.* (1972) recorded three species of birds visiting grape gardens in Tamil Nadu. Toor and Ramzan (1974) recorded ten species of birds causing damage to grapes in Punjab. During the survey of bird pests of grapes in February to March, 1981, we recorded 22 species of birds visiting grape orchards around Hyderabad. Among them 15 species were beneficial and 7 species harmful to the ripening berries.

Among the harmful birds two species of

Sunbirds, namely Purple Sunbird, *Nectarinia asiatica* Linnaeus, and Purplerumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* Latham, are recorded for the first time, as new avian pests damaging ripening grape berries, in grape gardens around Hyderabad. These birds pierce and puncture the berries and suck the juice making them unfit for human consumption.

The extent of damage caused by these birds was assessed in two gardens — one in Grape Research Station, Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University, Rajendranagar and another in a private orchard nearby. In these gardens 50 bunches of Anab-e-Shahi variety were examined at random to estimate the extent of damage by these birds. In each bunch, the total num-